



Environmental Management System Initiatives for Government Entities



“WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME”

Local government managers are faced with a wide array of challenges and decisions every day. The most frequently asked question about environmental management systems is "Sounds good--but what's in it for my organization?" In fact, there are a large number of reasons for implementing an EMS and the benefits of doing so are tangible and measurable. The following examples from local governments around the country illustrate why implementing an EMS makes good sense, not just in terms of protecting the environment but from a wide variety of perspectives.

Resource savings (natural, monetary)

“Building on the momentum generated early on in the program, we moved forward with a recycling program for lab waste that has diverted 18,000 lbs of waste from the landfill in a three-month period.”

“In just over one year into the EMS implementation, we were able to identify \$300,000 in operating savings, \$66,000 of which was directly attributable to meeting defined EMS energy conservation objectives and targets. This is not a bad return on our two year project investment of \$89,241 in direct labor costs. Additionally we were delighted to add better-defined roles and responsibilities to our EMS list of wins.”

“In terms of water use reduction, we eliminated 100% potable water use from our Greens, Dirt and Trash operations which equates to 31 million gallons of potable water saved. For fuel use and emissions, we saved 90,000 gallons of diesel and 9 tons of CO₂.”

“We saved \$706,000 in heavy equipment rates by shutting off equipment during breaks and lunch periods. An additional \$80,000 was saved in diesel costs thanks to these shutdowns.”

Potential Financial Benefits (Improved bond rating and reduced insurance premiums)

“Many people hear 'environmental management' and immediately think two things: bureaucracy and expense. But the EMS effort for us yielded dozens of real world, long-term cost savings in areas like reduced power and water use. Perhaps even more significant is the possible impact on our bond ratings. Rating agencies recognized that, in taking time to examine how we did our-day-to-day business, the County had created a workplace that was less likely to generate injuries or serious environmental accidents. Less risk means greater opportunity for return on an investment. We're told the potential impact of our EMS, taken with other factors, is a 1/16th to 1/8th of a point improvement, which could mean millions of dollars of taxpayer money saved each time we borrow money for capital projects. Now, that's the kind of documented savings that makes elected leaders and the public both very happy. ”

“Insurance companies have indicated that we can expect to see, in the future, a 20% reduction in our insurance premiums as a result of our EMS documentation and the operational controls now in place.”

Environmental Efficiencies

“Our organization set an objective and target related to resource conservation which included our diesel, electricity, natural gas, and water usage. The [target] goal was 10% savings for 1 year and each facility was responsible for finding creative ways to achieve these savings. After changing procedures,

communicating the goals and monitoring results, the total operational savings for one year resulted in monetary savings of approximately \$63,631.”

Operational efficiency and consistency, including improved compliance

“The EMS has provided us a consistent method for finding the root causes of our non-compliances. We are no longer applying reactive quick fixes for violations, but are seeking to eliminate the causes of these violations and prevent future occurrences. Training, communication, monitoring, measuring and regular management review are the EMS tools we use every day that make this possible.”

Better relationships with regulators

“The pilot project has provided an opportunity to reshape our interactions with our regulators. Our past dealings with EPA had a confrontational quality. The pilot project allowed the agency to take on a new role as mentor and partner. This was one of the more valuable outcomes of the project.”

“Our discharges are heavily regulated. The regulating agencies are responsible for over 3000 wastewater treatment plants across the state. I'm convinced that when the regulators see all the effort that we've invested into our EMS, they see us as doing our best to achieve the same goals they have for the state's streams and rivers. I believe they're more confident of our reported data, and less likely to pursue an enforcement action when we have an occasional accident. ”

“Increased exposure from the project has enabled us to be in more of a leadership role among environmental professionals. This in turn has led to an improved relationship with regulators and opened more doors for us as a public agency.”

Improved environmental awareness, involvement and competency throughout the organization

“There's a much better understanding of environmental issues in every department of the fenceline, not just in the environmental department. We are recognizing simple internal “housekeeping” measures that are having a positive effect on our environmental performance. We have self-imposed additional requirements to help prevent pollution, reduce energy use, manage our contractor, and expand environmental education for our citizens. Employees are bringing ideas for reducing our waste streams and for less toxic products. There has been a definite improvement in involvement and morale!”

Better communication about environmental issues inside and outside the organization

“We know much more about our environmental issues than we did 18 months ago. Consequently we are more articulate in our conversations with other departments, other bureaucratic systems, with the state, with our own regulators, and with our neighbors. People now have an avenue to bring up environmental issues. There are fewer stigmas in being involved in environmental programs.”

“We have better communication with our vendors. It's easier to require them to maintain an environmental focus that is consistent with our policy and our objectives.”

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